

## Marriage and leaving Israel.

The wedding was to be a simple affair, but this being Israel it was more complicated than necessary. The date was fixed for February 24<sup>th</sup> 1957 in a wedding hall, Weiss on Rehov Herzl in the Hadar (center) of Haifa. I invited my parents and family from Scotland, but only my mother and my sister Beatrice came.

Before being married in a Jewish ceremony I had to prove that I was born into a Jewish family. We had an interview with a Rabbi at the Rabbinate in Haifa. My proof of Jewishness was a couple of letters (or was it one?) from the secretary of the kibbutz, that he had known me for a number of years and that I came from a good “kosher” family. Interestingly, and never investigated was the fact that the mazkir (secretary) of the kibbutz was himself not Jewish, being Lionel H who had joined our group because of a girl friend while we were on Hachshara in England. The Rabbi made it clear to Mimi that the wedding could not take place without her going through the “mikveh”, ritual bath for purification purposes. Mimi balked and decided she would skip this step, and not obtain the required certification. It is customary to go to the mikveh as close to the wedding as possible. To quote “If they will not marry us we will live in sin but no mikveh!” she did not say this directly to the Rabbi.

The wedding day itself was a beautiful day. Mimi still did not have a certificate showing that she had been to the Mikveh and was under pressure from her uncle Yaakov to get one. This was a surprising turn of events, since Yaakov was one of the ‘Old’ pioneers of nearby Kiryat Haim, known for its secularism and socialism. I do not think he had ever been to “shul” since leaving Europe in the 1930s. Mimi went to the Mikvah, offered to pay but not immerse and of course was turned down. All of this fuss was for naught, since at no time did the Rabbi officiating the ceremony ask for proof. Mimi was a beautiful bride, very radiant. The Rabbi turned up with a small chupah (canopy) and when he saw that the wedding was large, he had to send his assistant for a larger one, thus a short delay in the service. I do not recollect who was at the wedding, except that a lorry loaded with people came from the kibbutz, both Mimi’s friends from the Kiryot and my friends from Amiad. It was a joyful wedding, lots of joking and dancing. During the service Mimi had a fit of

giggling, and none of us were very respectful of the religious ceremony. I think my mother was shocked at our behavior.

We went back to the apartment and my attempt to carry my bride over the threshold ended when I tripped over some barbed wire surrounding the small patch of lawn in front of the house, and ripped the trouser leg of my “ new” wedding suit. The next day it poured all day. This was my one day off work and our honeymoon.



My mother stayed for a week, and she and Beatrice did some touring. My mother was not impressed by Israel. I do not know what she expected, but Haifa to her seemed shabby, no large department stores, and I suppose it was backward compared to Britain. It was then a third world country, with crowded buses. She complained how everyone would talk to her on the bus, ask her questions, and just be themselves (Jews-Israeli's), not reserved like one finds among the British. Yet my mother had the reputation of talking to strangers on the bus in Glasgow! However my sister enjoyed her visit and was back in Israel within two years, working as a nurse at Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem. She eventually met her husband, Dr. Noah Lucas, an ex Glaswegian but also a professor at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and they lived in Jerusalem for many years.

In the summer of 1957 my maternal grandmother died and willed me some money. Although I always thought of her a rich woman, very little money was found on her death. I learned the story of her death later, which was a mystery involving theft and possible murder. She left me 300 pounds sterling in her will, which was quite a bit in those days. This was before we had decided to come to the US. In fact it was only 4 months after our wedding, and our decision on pursuing studies in the US was not made until the summer of 1958. We decided to use the money for a vacation in Italy, something Mimi had been dreaming of for years. In order to do so we both needed permission from the Israeli Army, to leave the country since Mimi was of military age, and I needed to be released from reserve duty.

Mimi went to the local office of the ministry of defense for a permit to leave and sat for a whole morning without seeing anyone. The secretary in charge announced that the office would close for an hour for lunch. Mimi lost her temper and barged in to the inner office yelling that she had wasted a morning of her precious time, and that she would report this to higher ups (Ben Gurion) since she was an employee of the Ministry. This threat seemed to work and she got her exit permit very quickly. However she was asked stupid questions like, "why are you going to Italy?" On vacation, "Whom are you staying with?" No one, in a hotel, "which Hotel?" I don't know. "What, how can you go abroad without knowing anyone?" etc. etc. However in the end there was no problem, just a stupid clerk in an inefficient office.

I had no problems getting released, and there was some mix up at the office of the ministry of interior, resulting in my using my British passport to leave Israel since I was denied an Israeli Passport. I will not go into this complication. This mix up, really as to whether I was an Israeli citizen or not continues until this day. It all stems from that little piece of paper I signed on arrival in Israel and the loss of my initial identity card in the laundry.

This was a year fraught with problems, most of which turned out to be minor and had positive results. I am not certain of the order in which they occurred, but the effect on us was profound. After 6 months at work, I was told I would be laid off for one or two days. This was done so as not to give me a permanent position, and thus not pay fringe benefits, retirement etc. Although I was doing my job well, I could not be hired permanently since I

did not have the required qualifications for the position. Although I thought this very unjust, this was the agreement between government ministries and the Histadruth, the Israeli trade union organization. The Histadruth did not seem to offer much protection to its workers. This pattern would continue no matter how long I worked for the government. I discussed this with Mr. Zvi Ben-Adam, the head of the department, and he suggested the best course of action, since I was still young was to apply to universities in Israel and the USA and that he would support such an application with a strong letter of recommendation. He suggested I apply to Cornell University in New York where he had friends in the Department of Poultry Husbandry, a very respected department in a very good school. Of course I felt there was little chance of my being accepted, since I did not have a high school certificate. Mimi and I discussed the situation and came up with three possibilities. 1. She would tutor me for the equivalent of the High School Certificate (administered by London University) and I would apply for admission to the Hebrew University School of Agriculture, 2 Apply for admission to Glasgow University or the West of Scotland College of Agriculture, based on the fact that I had taken a course there a few years prior on Farm Management or 3 consider moving to the US for a few years and attend some college, possibly Cornell. This last possibility had support from Mimi's father who was living in New York. Thus applications were sent of to all three institutions. This must have been in the early spring of 1958.

Thus for about a year I studied under Mimi's guidance mathematics, English, Ancient Greek History, Modern Hebrew and Chemistry. I passed the exam in all subjects except mathematics in the summer of 1958, just before we left for the USA. It turns out that none of this was necessary. Mathematics ironically has always remained one of my weaknesses, although later in life I used statistics in my research without any problems. Meanwhile unrelated to this Mimi's mother Rutta, left for the US to join her husband, she had no idea that we might follow.

Following our wedding my mother-in-law planned on joining her husband in New York. He had been there four years. She felt that her only daughter was now in good hands. She had eked out a living all these years by being a dressmaker, and Salo, my father in law had from time to time sent some money.

We were very happy that first year of married life, and did not think of leaving Israel. We budgeted our expenses, but lived quite well. Both of us were working, I in the Ministry of Agriculture and Mimi for the Ministry of defense. Thus we brought home two salaries. We allocated money for all items, buying books, records, and going out to eat (very rare in Israel those days), and had planned our vacation to Italy. We had lots of friends both “Anglo Saxim” and Israeli. We even were invited to our first cocktail party by one of Mimi’s “friends” in Haifa. It was then we discovered we did not like the cocktail circuit. We had no desire to get drunk or stoned. We stood around holding our one drink and making inane conversation. I suppose we were beginning to see the changes that were to occur in Israeli society in general (alcohol, drugs etc) but at that time it seemed another world to us. These were kids with no idealism in a country still full of ideals.

In general we were very positive, and our apartment was always open, to visitors from both those who had left the kibbutz and those who stayed behind. Most of our friends from the kibbutz moved to the suburbs of Haifa (Kiryat Ata, Kiryat Motzkin) so that we moved in the same circle. My closest friend at that time was Les Collins, my buddy from the sheep rearing days. He lived in a near by suburb. Mimi had a large family in the Haifa area, aunts and uncles and of course lots of cousins about our age or slightly younger. We made new friends, occasionally going to the nearby Kibbutz, Ramat Yochanan and meeting with Peretz Nadel, a well-known folk-singer. He later became part of a group known as the Adler Trio. We became acquainted with some of our neighbors, mostly “Anglo-Saxim”, which meant either British or American, who also lived in Kiryat Bialik, in a parallel row of apartments, playing cards or scrabble. Our life was busy and pleasant. We read listened to music and discussed life and politics. There was no TV as yet.

Many “funny” things happened to us and we laughed at them together. We applied for housing for immigrants from Anglo-Saxon countries (since we did not want to live with Mimi’s mother for long, although that changed when she decided to go to the States). I was told that the organization of immigrants from Anglo Saxon countries (U.K. USA, S. Africa) could not help us, since we were a “mixed” marriage, that is a Romanian Jew with a British one!

Although I had sent my application to universities right after being informed that I could not have a permanent position it was not until spring of 1958 that I did get a letter from Glasgow and from Cornell admitting me to their respective programs. The response from Glasgow was positive, but with a caveat that I might be called up to Her Majesties Forces. From Cornell University it was admission to the Agricultural School, the Department of Poultry Husbandry, with credit for the course I had taken these years ago in Glasgow. I would love to get hold of the letters of recommendation and figure out why I got a semesters credit for the course. I owe an immense gratitude to Dr. Ben Adam and later to Drs. Marble and Baker of the Poultry Husbandry Department at Cornell. Their obituaries are below.

[http://ecommons.library.cornell.edu/bitstream/1813/18862/2/Marble\\_Dean\\_Richmond\\_1966.pdf](http://ecommons.library.cornell.edu/bitstream/1813/18862/2/Marble_Dean_Richmond_1966.pdf) and [http://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/16/nyregion/16baker.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/16/nyregion/16baker.html?_r=0).

Dr. Ben Adam and Dr. Marble were “ old” friends and I’m certain this influenced the decision. Dr. Marble had spent some time in Israel in 1955 working with Dr. Ben Adam.

Our decision was easy. We go to Cornell University in Ithaca, Upstate New York. . The semester started in September, we needed tickets and more important visas’ to the USA. The US consulate issuing visas was in Tel Aviv. I travelled down to Tel Aviv (I must have taken time off work) and found a long line of people. I was given a number and told it might take more than a day until my turn comes. Each applicant would have to be interviewed by someone in the office. Even in these days it was difficult to get a visa to the US. I had one advantage, instead of applying for a temporary visa as a student; I could apply for an immigrant visa under the British quota, which in that year was undersubscribed. Since Mimi also now had a British passport and was a British citizen, this would not be a problem. I physically pushed my way into the consulate. I had to fill out an immigration application, sit a medical (both of us), be checked by the police, I suppose of both countries, and get our visas all within a few months. This they could not promise. I returned after about a month, physically jumped to the head of the line (after all this was what most Israeli’s do) and I remember being evicted from the office. Finally I did get to talk with someone who was helpful and we had our immigrant visas just in time. Next stop was New York and we thought Cornell, and Ithaca. As far as we were concerned this was only a

temporary absence from Israel, although I had applied for immigrant status to make the transition easier.